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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate and validate the sources, characteristics, and perceived effectiveness of classrooms rules adopted by classroom practitioners. A survey of classroom rules was sent to a random sample of teachers in grades kindergarten through 8 in two large school systems in a midwestern metropolitan city; 128 surveys (27 percent) were returned. Results indicated that teachers were the source of classroom rules for 36 percent of the respondents, while a combination of teachers and students were the source indicated by 56 percent of the teachers. The mean number of rules for classroom management was 5.6, with about half the teachers listing rules for speaking, interaction, or movement; and about one third of the teachers listing rules regarding supplies or assignments. Teacher experience did not influence the number of classroom rules or the perception of rule effectiveness. Seventy percent of the classroom rules were stated in terms of desired behavior. (KDFB)

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SOURCE, CHARACTERISTICS, AND PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF CLASSROOM RULES

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Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and validate the sources, characteristics, and perceived effectiveness of classroom rules adopted by classroom practitioners. Typically, textbooks and other references regarding the nature and purpose of effective classroom rules suggest that rules be (a) limited in number (b) positive in tone and (c) mutually determined by the teacher and students (Good & Brophy, 1987; Putnam & Burke, 1992; Wakefield, J.F. 1996). In addition, Good and Brophy (1987) also suggested that rules should be analyzed regarding cost/benefit ratio. This study investigated how well these suggestions were applied in the typical elementary classroom today. In other words, what is the "state of the art" in terms of rule making?

The researchers were also interested in the possible effects of the number of years of teaching experience on the number of rules adopted and/or the perceived effectiveness of the rules in controlling the behavior for which the rule was designed. To that end, four hypotheses were advanced:

Hypothesis 1: That typically, teachers would publish five rules for classroom management.

Hypothesis 2: That more experienced teachers would name fewer rules for classroom management than less experienced teachers.

Hypothesis 3: That more experienced teachers would perceive their rules as more effective in controlling behavior than less experienced teachers.

Hypothesis 4: That the majority of classroom rules would be stated positively ("Do" rules rather that "don't do" rules).

Survey Procedures

A survey of classroom rules was sent to a random sample of teachers grades K-8 in two large school systems, one public (90,000+ students) and one parochial (25,000+ students) in a large metropolitan city in the midwest. Some 108 or 27% of the teachers returned the survey.

After providing basic demographic information, each teacher was asked to (1) name (verbatim) the rules published in his/her classroom, (2) name and describe the origin or source of rules (teacher determined, school determined, teacher-student determined etc.) and (3) on a scale of 1 to 10 (1=not effective; 10=very effective) indicate how effective each rule was in controlling/shaping the behavior for which it was intended.

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Results of Survey

The following demographic information was collected regarding the survey sample:

N = 108
FEMALES = 99
MALES = 9

Age ranges of final sample:

25 or younger	10
26-35	22
36-45	43
46-55	16
55+	9
NR	2

Mode: 36-45 years
Median 36-45 years

Grade level taught

Primary Grades	59
Middle Grades	29
Library	1
Special Education	19

Educational Level of Respondents

BA/BS	34
MA/MS	59
Post-MA	1
Other	13
NR	1

Respondents' Years of Teaching Experience

1 year or less	5
2-5 years	22
6-10 years	16
11-15 years	22
16-20 years	23
21-25 years	10
26+ years	9
NR	1

Mode: 16-20 years
Median: 11-15 years

Sources of Classroom Rules

SOURCE	FREQUENCY	TOTAL
Teacher	39	36.11%
Teacher/Students	61	56.11%
Student	2	1.85%
Other	6	5.56%

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1: That typically, teachers would publish five rules for classroom management.

Finding: Proven
Mean Number of Rules: 5.6
Range: 2-8 Rules

MOST FREQUENTLY NAMED RULES BY TYPE

Rule Type	Frequency	Percent of Total
1. Speaking Rules	59	54.63%

Example of Speaking Rules:
Raise your hand to speak
Speak softly/quietly
No talking in halls
No talking during seatwork

2. Interaction Rules	57	52.78%

Example of Interaction Rules:
Respect others
Be patient and helpful
Be courteous at all times
Don't fight

3. Movement Rules	53	49.07%

Example of Movement Rules:
No running in building
Don't leave seat without permission
No horseplay
Keep hands, feet, objects to yourself

4. Rules Regarding Supplies	36	33.33%

Example of Materials Rules:
Always have a pencil/paper/pen
Have required supplies
Keep materials in desk neat and clean
Every student must have folder on his/her desk

5. Assignment Rules	33	30.56%

Example of Assignment Rules
Complete your assignments on time
Fully complete each assignment
Turn your homework in at the beginning of school/class
Check your work before submitting it

Hypothesis 2: That more experienced teachers would name fewer rules for classroom management than less experienced teachers.
Finding: Not Proven

Hypothesis 3: That more experienced teachers would perceive their rules as more effective in controlling behavior than less experienced teachers.
Finding: Not Proven

RANK ORDER OF RULES BY PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS

Rule Type	Effectiveness Scale of -3 to 3
Assignment	+2.33
Movement	+2.09
Interaction	+2.05
Materials	+1.99
Speaking	+1.98

Hypothesis 4: That the majority of classroom rules would be stated positively ("Do" rules rather that "don't do" rules).
Finding: Proven

Seventy-two (72) percent of all rules named by teachers who participated in the study were stated positively.

Conclusions

The results of this study seemed to indicate that generally (a) teachers identified five rules for their classrooms, (b) these rules were more likely to be stated in terms of the behavior desired (positively), and (c) the number of years of teaching experience had no effect on the number of rules named or the perceived effectiveness of those rules.

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